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ON THE COVER
Get in the spirit of the season with our awesome selection of holiday gifts in the 2018 Holiday Gift Guide. Models: Michael Schwengel and Matt Hamilton. Photo by Mike Hnida

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Editorial

Managing Editor Chris Tarbox 612-436-4692
Editorial Assistants Linda Raines 612-436-4660, Kassidy Tarala
Editor Emeritus Ethan Boatner
Editorial Associate George Holdgrafer
Contributors Ellen Krug, Steve Lenius, Jennifer Parello, Randy Stern, John Townsend, Bradley Traynor, Carla Waldemar

Advertising

Sales & Advertising Director Barry Leavitt 612-436-4690
Senior Account Executive Suzanne Farrell 612-436-4699
Account Executives
Nathan Johnson 612-436-4695
Richard Kranz 612-436-4675
Advertising Associate: George Holdgrafer
Sales & Event Administration:
Linda Raines 612-436-4660
Classifieds Suzanne Farrell 612-436-4699
National Sales Representatives
Rivendell Media 212-242-6863

Creative

Digital Director Mike Hnida 612-436-4679
Photographer Sophia Hantzes

Administration

Publisher Lavender Media, Inc.
President & CEO Stephen Rocheford 612-436-4665
Vice President & CC Pierre Tardif 612-436-4666
Chief Financial Officer Mary Lauer 612-436-4664
Distribution Manager/Administrative Assistant Samantha Schaller 612-436-4660
Founders George Holdgrafer, Stephen Rocheford
Inspiration Steven W. Anderson (1954-1994), Timothy J. Lee (1968-2002), Russell Berg (1957-2005), Kathryn Rocheford (1914-2006), Jonathan Halverson (1974-2010), Adam Houghtaling (1984-2012), Walker Pearce (1946-2013), Tim Campbell (1939-2015), Donald Tardif (1942-2018)

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Lavender Media, Inc.
7701 York Ave S, Suite 225, Edina, MN 55435
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612-436-4685 **Fax**
612-436-4660 **Subscriptions/Distribution**
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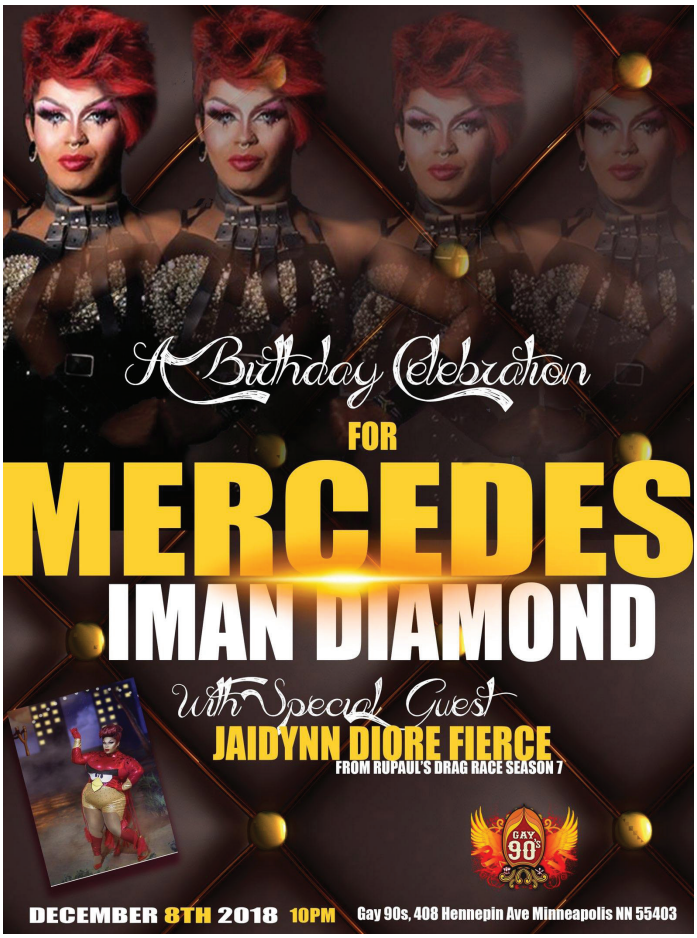

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FROM THE EDITOR | BY CHRIS TARBOX

Gift Me All Your Lovin'

I'm not gonna lie: one of my favorite, favorite, *favorite* times of the year is the holiday season. I love all of the family togetherness, the cheerful ambiance, and—natch—the sugar overload, but the best part to me has to be gift shopping for friends and family. And I take it seriously. Damn it, I go all out, and I make sure that my presents are the best presents at the family Christmas gathering. Fight me.

And for those of you like me, I try to find my gifts from a diverse array of sources in order to find the most unique presents for my crew. In the rainbow community, it's certainly important to support companies that are GLBT-owned or GLBT-friendly, so as the holiday rush arrives, *Lavender* has put together 2018's Holiday Gift Guide to put a spotlight on a treasure trove of great gift ideas.

Check out amazing gift ideas in the realms of fashion, pets, food, sports, books and more, and make the holidays even happier for that special someone in your life!

On top of that, we meet Dr. Gerald Gurss, the new artistic director of the Twin Cities Gay Men's Chorus. So on behalf of everyone here at *Lavender*, happy hunting for your holiday treasures, and have a happy and safe holiday season! ∎

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In the Spirit of Giving

Eventually, one has fewer intimates to whom one gives gifts, less spondulix to lavish on them, and, like you, they already have everything they need—and often much more. Moreover, even best friends, and certainly family, don't always share the same tastes. "An antique silver cow creamer! How…thoughtful. You shouldn't have…"

And you shouldn't. But how to pare down? If you're planning to actually get together with loved ones, I'd wager everyone would balk at the suggestion they sit around the fire writing out checks.

Food has always made safe gifting, and it's been hard to go wrong with unique coffees, luscious truffles, or other tidbits of the recipient's fantasies. Today, however, you may discover that Aunt May is vegan, recoiling at her once-loved wild salmon treats, Uncle Louie is totally keto, and your sister's religiously gluten-free. A gifting minefield.

My list—those precious few—and I have become more pragmatic, asking directly, "What would you like?" or more subtly, "Would you like a …?" This latter approach, in full disclosure, may contain unexpected pitfalls and surprises. At my last birthday, when a close friend asked at if I'd like an Instant Pot, I jumped at the idea; everyone is raving about theirs, and I pictured corned beef briskets rising in perfection from the waters in under an hour. As I type, it sits gleaming on my counter. Unused. I'm afraid of it. Belatedly, I recalled why I never took up canning back in the '70s with my never-used pressure cooker.

A childhood chum and I talk on the phone weekly. About this time of year, one of us asks the other, "What card?" and we exchange choices, receive notice of their existence, and at the appropriate time buy exactly what we want. I used to scour the Internet for arcane jigsaw puzzles for her, but learned that, like Meerschaum pipes, they're very user-specific. It's fun post-holiday to share what we got and thank one another.

Wherever you are on the gifting spectrum this season, for whichever holiday, I wish you good fortune not only for your celebration, but in the choice of your giving. There are also many programs and agencies that need help year-round, and even I keep a couple on my list. ∎

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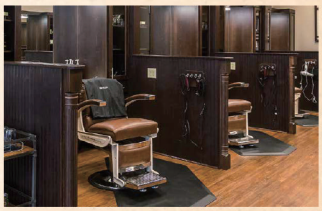

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Preaching To The Choir (Literally)

Twin Cities Gay Men's Chorus welcomes new artistic director Dr. Gerald Gurss.

Gerald Gurss earned a doctorate in choral conducting at the University of South Carolina. Photo courtesy of Gerald Gurss

He's not in Kansas anymore. Dr. Gerald Gurss, Twin Cities Gay Men's Chorus' new artistic director, has loved music since he was a child in small-town Kansas, watching *Hee-Haw* every Saturday night with his father. With a mother who frequently sang solos in church and performed in a gospel trio at various state fairs, Gurss grew up in a world centered around music.

"Being a choir geek in high school really propelled me to want to keep pursuing that love in college. I was a dual major in voice performance and music education for two years. After having to observe elementary music classes, I was cured, and I only wanted to be a performance major. Bless *anybody* who teaches children. They aren't getting paid *nearly* enough," Gurss says. "I went straight into a master's program in voice at Miami University of Ohio, where I learned that I really loved conducting more than performing. I became the assistant conductor of the Miami University Men's Glee and served as chorus master for the MU opera."

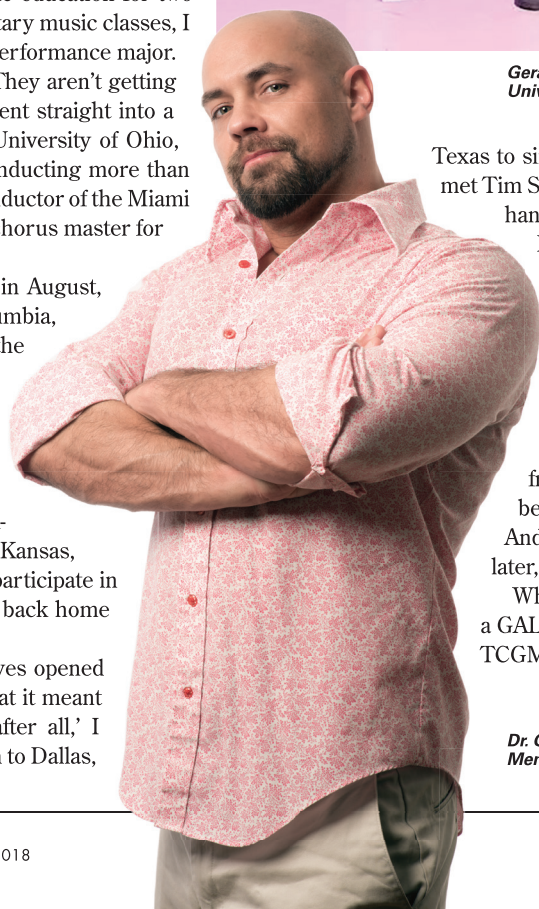
Before moving to the Twin Cities in August, Gurss took his conducting to Columbia, South Carolina where he attended the University of South Carolina, earning a doctorate in choral conducting with research focused on the pedagogy of transgender singers in the choral rehearsal.

Gurss says it was difficult to express his sexuality in his hometown in Kansas, so he had to drive two hours away to participate in his first gay choir, hoping that no one back home would know about it.

"At the first rehearsal, I had my eyes opened to about 150 different examples of what it meant to be gay. 'Maybe it'll all be okay after all,' I thought. I remember we traveled down to Dallas, Texas to sing with the Turtle Creek Chorale, which is where I met Tim Seelig for the first time," Gurss says. "Not only was he handsome, but he was also the most amazing conductor. Right then, I decided that I wanted to be a conductor like him. I sang with Heartland from 1999 to 2002, and then I rejoined after returning from grad school in Ohio, and I sang with them again until 2008."

When Gurss moved to South Carolina, he conducted One Voice Chorus, an SATB (soprano/alto/tenor/bass) chorus, and he served as their director from 2008 to 2018. During that time, he says he really began to cultivate his calling to serve the GALA (Gay And Lesbian Association) chorus community. Ten years later, he landed in the frozen North.

While worked with One Voice Chorus, Gurss attended a GALA leadership conference where he met Stan Hill, the TCGMC director at the time.



Dr. Gerald Gurss is the new artistic director of the Twin Cities Gay Men's Chorus. Photo by Deborah Triplett

"I instantly loved him and his impish sense of humor. 'Here's my people,' I thought. Throughout my time with One Voice, I continued to follow TCGMC and their fantastic commissions. I loved their commitment to artistic excellence. I programmed their commission, 'Oliver Button is a Sissy', and I own the recordings of my favorite other two commissions: 'Through a Glass, Darkly' and 'Two Boys Kissing.' When the artistic director position was announced, I knew our artistic and social values aligned, so I applied. I'm honored to lead this amazing community of singers," Gurss says.

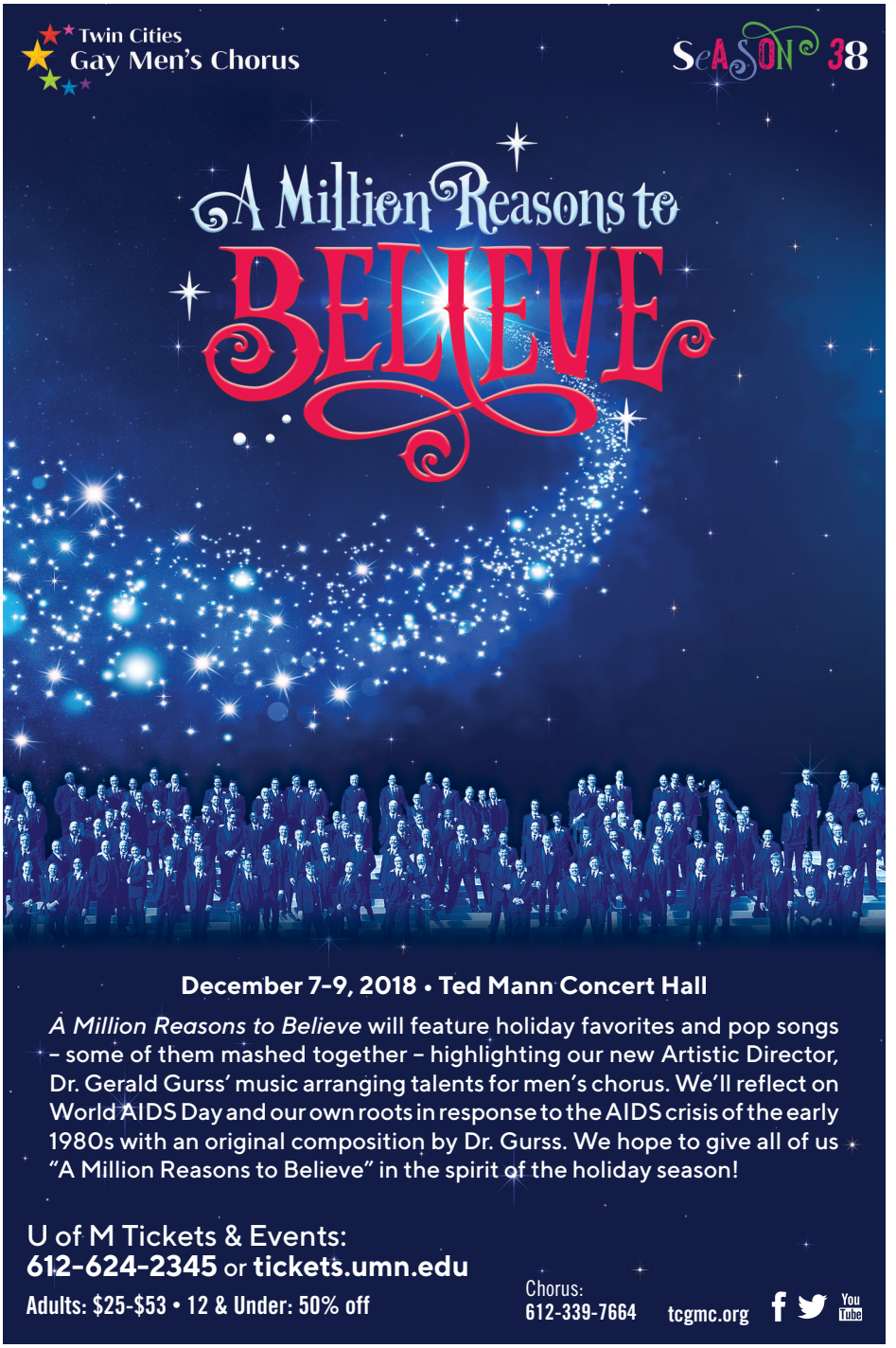
He says leading TCGMC is a "weekly high." With rehearsals every Tuesday, Gurss says he leaves each week musically and emotionally fulfilled by the energy the chorus puts into creating "not only the best possible product, but also the best possible choral community where many feel like it's a home as well as a chorus." He says he once had a straight ally explain the importance of TCGMC the best.

"She said, 'When you know someone's heart, and you see their face, it's hard to be afraid of them.' I believe a lot of the bigotry, racism, homophobia, transphobia, and hate exists because people believe antiquated and controlling messages passed down to them from people who were also afraid," Gurss says. "TCGMC offers one such face. We comfort and entertain the LGBTQA community with our music as well as educate and commune with our allies and those who seek to know how to be allies."

Gurss says TCGMC is getting ready for several exciting upcoming events including the 2020 GALA Chorus Festival, which will be hosted in the Twin Cities, and the opening of this season with "A Million Reason to Believe", which is a holiday-themed concert woven together with threads of music by Lady Gaga. Gurss says this concert will also feature a brand new World AIDS Day piece, which he wrote for TCGMC.

"TCGMC rounds up its concert season with a spin on the timeless game show *Hollywood Squares*. We're calling it *Stiletto Squares*! The theme of this show will be the music of the great pop music divas from the 1950s to 2018," Gurss says. "Audience members will compete for fabulous prizes and be highly entertained by this high-energy, high-hilarity season closer!"

For more information about TCGMC concerts, visit tcgmc.org. ∎



By John Townsend

Holiday Entertainment For the 2018 Holiday Season

1. ANGELS WE HAVE HEARD ARE HIGH (O HOLY CRAP!)
Through Jan. 26
Brave New Workshop Theatre, 824 Hennepin Ave. Minneapolis
612-332-6620
www.BraveNewWorkshop.com
The region's premiere comedy theater, now in its 60th year, delivers its annual holiday show with a great big Christmas bow. Always a big hit, you'll hear The 12 Days of Christmas like you've never heard it before. New sketches and old ones make for irreverent fun. Veteran collaborators Lauren Anderson, Taj Ruler, and Denzel Belin are joined by Doug Neithercott, who is making his BNW debut. There is no acting troupe in the area whose comic timing and mischievous imagination is as sharp and as wild as these pros. But be warned—and they'll tell you this themselves—you may be offended. That's just a part of their M.O.!

2. CHRISTMAS WITH CANTUS
Dec. 13-23
Various Metro Area Locations
612-435-0055
www.cantussings.org
The thrilling all-male a capella vocal ensemble that sings in what's called TTBB (tenor, tenor, baritone, bass) is beloved for their vast mastery of all kinds of music. Christmastime is a wonderful opportunity to bask in their grasp of classical church music and carols. This season, you'll hear work inspired by Lessons and Carols, which was organized by Edward White Benson, who would become the Archbishop of Canterbury. What you'll hear is a modern take titled Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols, re-imagined for contemporary times.

3. HANDMADE HOLIDAYS & TOM'S CHRISTMAS FISH
Through Jan. 13
American Swedish Institute, 2600 Park Ave. Minneapolis
612-871-4907
www.asimn.org
The American Swedish Institute, located in the majestic Turnblad Mansion, features an exhibition and decorated rooms from the five Nordic countries, as well as works by Minnesotans and invited guest artists from the Czech Republic. Hand-blown glass pieces comprise a specially commissioned work in a tree shape. Danish handcrafts include beaded snowflakes, cross-stitch hangings and runners in the Denmark Room along with Danish Teak furniture classics.
Of course, it has been said billions of times that Christmas is for children, and by extension, the child within all of us. So catch Tom's Christmas Fish inspired by the Swedish mother-daughter duo of author Rita Tornqvist and illustrator Marit Tornqvist. A Christmas booth serves as an interactive element in which kids and adults can pretend to be a baker, a fishmonger, or an artist.

4. HOLIDAY INN, THE NEW IRVING BERLIN MUSICAL
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Chanhassen Dinner Theatres Main Stage, 501 W. 78th St. Chanhassen
952-934-1525
www.ChanhassenDT.com
The nation's flagship dinner theater company offers a very recent stage musical adaptation of a classic vintage film. Holiday Inn, The New Irving Berlin opened on Broadway two years ago after premiering to raves at Connecticut's esteemed Goodspeed Opera House. Based on the 1942 Bing Crosby/Fred Astaire movie, Holiday Inn offers a song and dance trio facing internal differences. But of course that's nothing that a brand new start with a new vision on a Connecticut farm can't fix! You'll hear some fantastic tunes with lots of nostalgic charge: "Blue Skies", "Cheek to Cheek", and two classic holiday tunes, "White Christmas" and "Easter Parade"! How festive is that? The marvelous Ann Michels leads a stellar cast that includes Michael Gruber, Jessica Fredrickson, and Tony Vierling.

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By John Townsend

Holiday Entertainment For the 2018 Holiday Season

5. KATIE MCMAHON'S CELTIC CHRISTMAS
Dec. 21 at 7:30 pm
O'Shaughnessy Auditorium at St. Catherine University, 2004 Randolph Ave., St. Paul
651-690-6700
www.oshag.stkate.edu
If you want to experience something splendid and beautiful, then get thee to St. Kate's and lose yourself in the transcendent mystical vocals of Katie McMahon live! She is in a class by herself. This promises to be the quintessential traditional Christmas performance of the season. Known as the original voice of Riverdance and as Minnesota's own "Celtic Woman", McMahon captures the spirit with an ethereal delicacy beyond description.

6. LES MISÉRABLES
Dec. 18-30
Orpheum Theatre, 910 Hennepin Ave., Minneapolis
800-982-2787
www.HennepinTheatreTrust.org
Direct from its acclaimed two-and-half-year Broadway run, Les Mis looms as a majestic musical forged in passion, redemption, love, and class struggle. Based on the Victor Hugo novel, it may even be more prescient in our time than it was in the 1980s when the musical first took the world by storm. Hugo was inspired to write his 1862 masterwork in the late 1820s when he saw a man being arrested for stealing a loaf of bread. The story reminds us that years after the French Revolution, its aftershocks still gave way to injustice and continuous social disarray. How fitting that the musical's most famous song is the achingly resplendent "I Dreamed a Dream".

7. MISS RICHFIELD 1981: BORN AGAIN
Nov. 30-Dec. 22
Illusion Theater, 528 Hennepin Ave., Minneapolis
612-339-4944
www.illusiontheater.org
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Holiday Gift Guide

8. WHITE CHRISTMAS ON FILM WITH MAUD HIXSON IN CONCERT
Nov. 29-Dec. 6
Heights Theatre, 3951 Central Ave. NE, Columbia Heights
763-789-4992
www.heightstheater.com
White Christmas was the first movie made in Vista-Vision. Paramount Studios used twice the surface area of the standard 35 mm print. This sumptuous 1954 box office blockbuster, drenched in gorgeous Technicolor, features four musical legends at their height: Bing Crosby, Rosemary Clooney (George's aunt), Danny Kaye, and Vera-Ellen. The gifted Maud Hixson will sing a 20-minute live concert beforehand with accompaniment by Rick Carlson. The historic Heights Theater, established 1926, is an experience unto itself. It's an actual movie palace made to order for that consummate film director, Michael Curtiz, who also gave us The Adventures of Robin Hood, Santa Fe Trail, Casablanca, and Mildred Pierce. And though the Heights was established in 1926 during the silent era, its silver screen aura is ideal a half century-plus later for the widescreen concept that took off in the 1950s. Their Wurlitzer organ and their sound system are also a major draw for film buffs and anyone who simply wants to lose themselves in a splendid old movie experience. There are few better ways to escape.

9. THE WICKHAMS: CHRISTMAS AT PEMBERLEY
Dec. 1-30
Jungle Theater, 2951 Lyndale Ave., Minneapolis
612-822-7063
www.jungletheater.com
This year, a whole new holiday play re-imagines the Bennet residence of Jane Austen's novel, Pride and Prejudice. The focus is on the servants who work downstairs in contrast to those they serve. Clearly there is a sense of class division that will make for comedy and commentary. The Wickhams: Christmas at Pemberley exists in the same vein as classic television series such as Upstairs, Downstairs and Downton Abbey. Co-commissioned by the Jungle Theater with theaters in Chicago and the Bay Area, playwrights Margot Melcon and Lauren Gunderson continue musing on the world they created in last year's Jungle holiday treat, Miss Bennet.

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Dec 22

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Dec 1

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Dec 15

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Dec 31
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PHOTOS Home for the Holidays: Courtney Perry; Hicks & Lazarus: Travis Anderson Photo
Beauty and the Beast: Presentation made under license from Buena Vista Concerts, a division of ABC Inc. © 2015 Disney. All rights reserved.

MARTINPATRICK3

Holiday Gift Guide

By Eric Poole

Travel

This Christmas, go gay. In a big way.

Travel has always been a great gift, because unlike that cat calendar or set of Ginsu knives, it can't be used against you later. And travel is a gift with lasting impact, since you'll always have the memories. (That Beer Belly fanny pack? No one remembers where it went, and no one asks.)

But even better is a gift of GAY travel. While we'd all like to believe that the world is a Marlo Thomas Free to Be You and Me moment, it's not. And being gay at a straight resort or on a straight cruise, while better than it was 20 years ago, can still mean that you find yourself being WAY less than authentic. On a trip for which you paid thousands of dollars.

That's why, every Christmas, my husband and I give each other the gift of an all-gay trip. (Sure, we also take straight cruises with his parents, where we get to hear captivating details about hip replacements and how hard it is to drive at night. But it's the all-gay trip that we know we'll enjoy most.)

We've done Rhine (Germany) and Danube (Germany/Austria) and Rhone (France) river cruises, Mexico, Caribbean and Mediterranean ocean cruises, and a land tour of South Africa. And we've loved every big gay trip, for different reasons.

The all-gay ocean cruises are essentially 3,000-person boy (or girl) buffets, and are super fun if you're 30 and looking to party all night in costumes that rely more on sluttiness than imagination.

Less destination-focused, ocean cruises are mostly about excess. (A favorite story from friends of mine: one half of the couple left a top deck dance party and went down to his cabin to go to bed. Several hours later, there was a knock on the door. Two guys stood there, holding up his partner, whose pants were on backwards, and they said, "Does this belong to you?")

The all-gay river cruises and land tours, on the other hand, tend to skew a bit older, and are all about exotic itineraries and making friends. Since your ship or tour group will only be anywhere from 40-200 people, you have a chance to really get to know both your fellow travelers and the destinations.

Sure, there are still theme parties, but it's less about having enough cocktails to make you go blind and more about having experiences that will make everyone back home blind with envy. For example, on our recent Rhine river cruise, one included tour was a tasting in a fabulous wine cellar under a castle in Austria. Which was a double bonus—booze and glamour. (I should clarify that some gay river cruise and land tour operators, like the much-beloved Brand g Vacations, include unlimited adult beverages on most of their trips, so you can still go for that gold medal in partying.)

Now, when it comes to giving a trip like this as a gift, unless you're footing the whole bill and springing it on your unsuspecting partner, your Christmas tree ain't gonna have a lot of surprises under it (since the two of you decided in advance on the trip). What I suggest, then, is to jazz things up with little destination-related gifts, like a travel guide, safari pants (for a safari trip), a gift certificate for rehab (if it's an ocean cruise), etc.

If you're anything like my husband and I, you probably work a LOT—which makes the gift of a trip that much more meaningful. Because these gay vacations become an opportunity to have quality time together, to bond, and to remember that even though he leaves shit lying everywhere in the house, the two of you share a lasting love not only for travel, but for each other.

Eric Poole is Director of Marketing for Brand g Vacations, the leading operator of all-GLBT, all-inclusive river cruises and land tours.

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Holiday Gift Guide

By Chris Tarbox

Food 'n Fun

Sometimes, the best gifts don't come in the form of electronics or clothes, but rather offerings that complement your inner entertainer. These gifts are perfect for when you host parties or need to enhance your kitchen to a new level of fabulosity.

1. ASSORTED TRUFFLES GIFT BOX TOWER
You know what's awesome? Chocolate. You know what's even more awesome? A freaking TOWER of chocolate. From the fine folks at Just Truffles, this is the ultimate gift for someone with a serious sweet tooth. You can choose from a variety of over 40 handmade chocolate truffle flavors to fill up a tower of gift boxes for a total of 30 truffles.
$143
Just Truffles
justtruffles.com

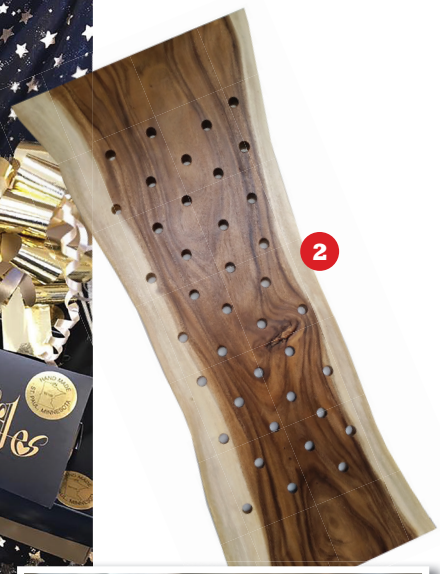
2. CHAMCHA WOOD WINE RACK
A one of a kind, solid chamcha wood wine rack, this handsome and unique freestanding sculptural piece is perfect for any home.
$699
Habitation Furnishing + Design
www.urbiaimports.com

3. MID-CENTURY COCKTAIL SET
Talk about glass with some serious class! This vintage silver cocktail set boasts eight tumblers and an ice bucket in a special carrying rack. A perfect holiday gift just in time for New Year's festivities.
$125
MidModMen+friends
midmodmen.com

4. TANGLETOWN GARDENS SYRUP AND HONEY
Minneapolis' own Tangletown Gardens isn't just known for its gardening mastery, but for its great selection of farm-fresh produce and groceries courtesy of its farm in Plato, MN. Complement your breakfast with their delicious syrup and honey selections.
$12 for syrup, $8 for honey
Tangletown Gardens
www.tangletowngardens.com

5. NAMBE DAZZLE TOASTING FLUTES
Ring in the new year with this gorgeous two-piece glass toasting flute set. These flutes rise out of polished silver plate bases with amazing dazzle designs, and you won't be able to imagine drinking champagne from anything else!
$75
Scheherazade Jewelers
www.sjewelers.com

6. GRADIENT-STYLE WOOD CUTTING BOARDS
Chop up those veggies in style with these awesome gradient-style wood cutting boards from Future Framing, crafted from American Cherry and Maple wood, expertly glued and coated with mineral oil to protect the wood. Choose from small, medium, and large-sized options.
$25-45
Future Framing
futureframing.net



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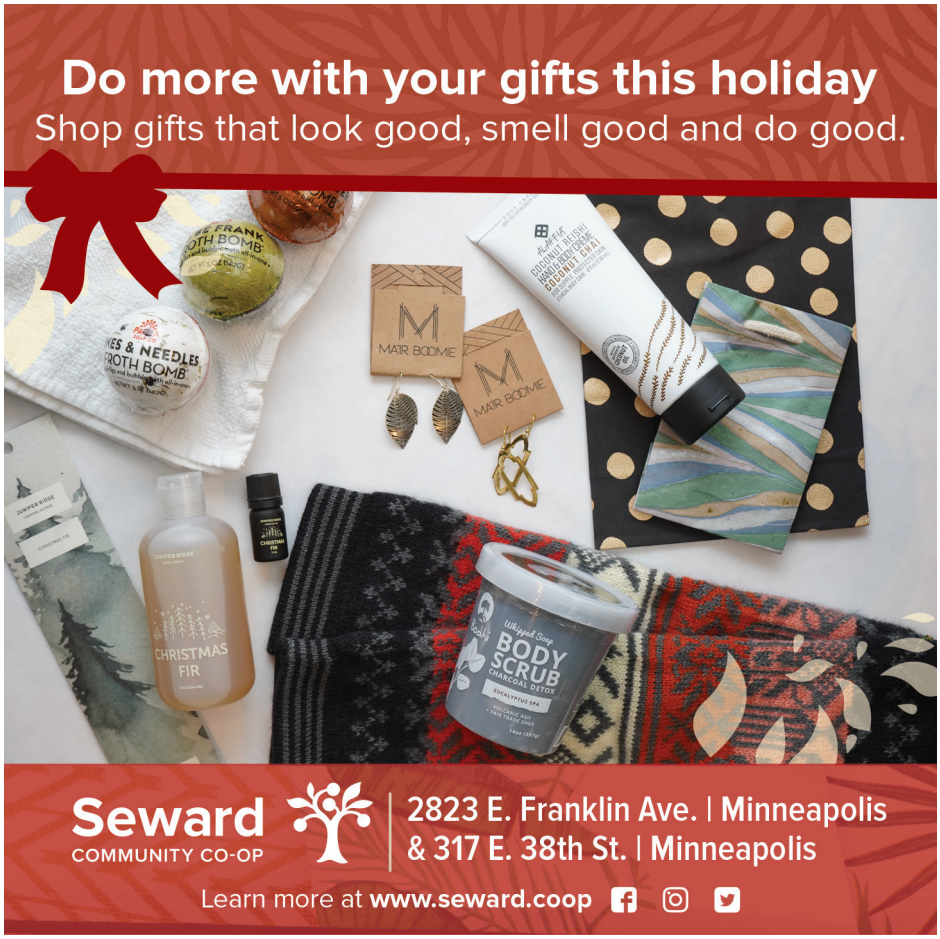
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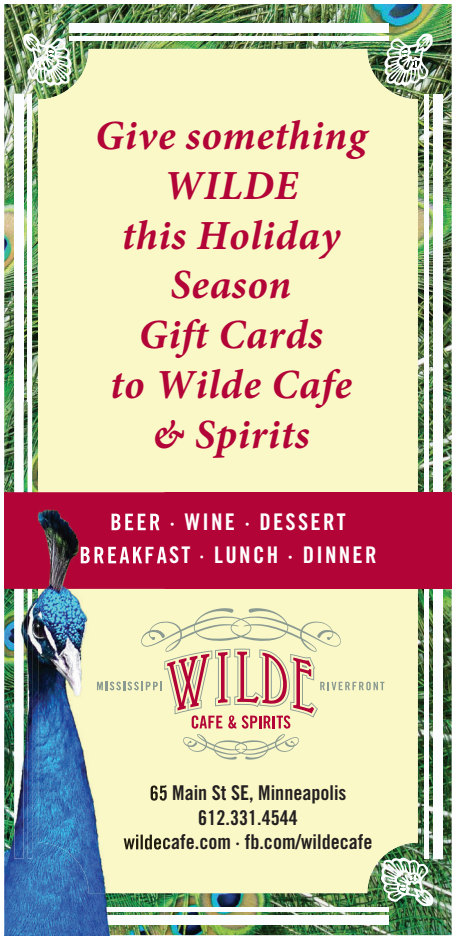
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Holiday Gift Guide

By Kassidy Tarala

Jewelry

Love is in the air during the holiday season. From the sweet and spicy smells of cinnamon, cranberry and gingerbread to the warm cozy feeling of escaping a snowy night and enjoying the soft glow of the fireplace, there's nothing more romantic than the holiday season. So why shouldn't your gift for that special someone be just as thoughtful, romantic, and—of course—sparkly?
Give a gift that will make your significant other's jaw drop to the floor. Pick from these unique and gorgeous jewelry items to say "Happy Holidays," and mean it.

1. DINOSAUR BONE AND LAVA BEAD BRACELETS
From Jewelry by Johan, these bracelets are a bad-to-the-bone gift for your special someone. These unisex bead bracelets feature five genuine dinosaur bone beads. Give the gift of the extraordinary to your someone extraordinary.
$99 each, $179 for two
Jewelry by Johan
jewelrybyjohan.com

2. DIAMOND PLATINUM AND 18K GOLD NECKLACE
From New Gild Jewelers, this incredible, Oscar-worthy neckwear features an 8.49 carat natural fancy dark gray diamond (with a GIA Certificate) in a custom made necklace featuring over 8 carats of brilliant white diamonds. This will surely be a gift you'll be glad you gave… until you have to find a gift next year.
$29,990
New Gild Jewelers
newgild.com

3. HANDMADE WEDDING RING
From New Gild Jewelers, these rings are handmade using lost wax casting and absolutely perfect for that special someone. Whether you're about to tie the knot, celebrating an impressive anniversary, or hoping to start the next chapter of life together, this is a gift that will make you say "I do."
$475 in sterling silver; gold, palladium, and platinum available upon request
New Gild Jewelers
newgild.com

4. LEATHER-WRAPPED PEARL NECKLACES AND BRACELETS
From Max's, these leather-bound freshwater pearl necklaces and bracelets make a hip, modern statement while maintaining a classic elegance. Perfect for everyday or a night on the town. A fresh twist on a classic piece, these pearl necklaces and bracelets are a gift as unique as your love.
$200 to $1,070
Max's
stylebymax.com

5. ASSORTED ONE-OF-A-KIND GEMSTONE RINGS
From Max's, these rings are designed by jewelry designer Jamie Joseph. Her unique cuts of stone set in a gold or silver band make each ring nothing like the next. Show your special someone how much they mean to you with a gift that will never be repeated.
$680 to $2,060
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Holiday Gift Guide

By Mike Marcotte

Lookin' and Feelin' Good

Gift that special someone in your life with hair and skin care products from Minnesota companies.

Life changes for the better when you take pride in your appearance. Confidence skyrockets and you end up with more pep in your step. Heck, it might even help you land a number when you're out at the bar.
However, maintaining a daily beauty routine isn't cheap, especially when you tally all of the products you need in the morning. Fortunately, there are quality businesses based right here in Minnesota offering hair and skin care products, along with services, at a fraction of the cost. And whether they're for yourself or as a gift, it's always good to buy local!

1. BEARD OIL FROM AVERAGE BROS COMPANY

Average Bros Company's products are made in Minneapolis by Bobby Willis and Nate French, two childhood friends from northern Minnesota. And their scents remind you up time up north with names like Sawtooth Mountain Cedar Citrus and The Workshop. They use all-natural ingredients, meaning you aren't splashing chemicals all over your face. I've grown to really like their beard oil; they also sell four beard balm scents along with an aloe-based aftershave balm. Average Bros Co. beard oil is about half the price of what you'll buy at specialty shops. All of their products run between $15-17. Their products are currently available at barbershops, salons and specialty shops in eight states as well as on their website.

$16
www.averagebros.com

2. HAIRCUT AT THE BARBER SHARP

You won't see big screen televisions at The Barber Sharp in Northeast Minneapolis. Instead, you'll find good conversation, cans of PBR, and barbers who know how to make customers look good. The secret of this barber shop, which opened in 2010, is making the rounds. Walk inside on a Saturday and you'll likely encounter a wait to see one of their seven barbers. They do take appointments over the phone (I would strongly encourage doing that). If you do walk in, The Barber Shop's website has a webcam that will let you know when it's time to get a new look. In addition to the classic haircut, they provide men's facials for $20 (worth it), razor shaves and you can get a neck trim for only $5. Owner Kelly Sharp is a proprietor for Barber Shop Sharp, which makes a line of beard oils selling for $25 a bottle. The Barber Sharp is closed Sundays and Mondays.

$22
349 13th Ave. NE, Minneapolis, MN
www.thebarbersharp.com

3. "FULL-SERVICE CLEANUP" AT HEIMIE'S HABERDASHERY

Heimie's Haberdashery, overlooking Rice Park in downtown Saint Paul, is my go-to spot when I need a new suit. They're reasonably priced, high quality and the customized service is superb. But they're known for more than fine threads. Heimie's also has a barber shop and services don't break the bank. Basic haircuts start at $25 and facials are $40. In the last couple years, owner Anthony Andler expanded and altered the store to create semi-private spaces where a groom and his wedding party can get ready. Heimie's Barber Shop offers wedding day clean-ups which will freshen everyone for photos, including same day shoe shines and shirt pressing. Gift cards are available for clothing and barber services. The staff at Heimie's know what they're doing; they have made Minnesota men look good since 1921.

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Holiday Gift Guide

By Mike Marcotte

Lookin' and Feelin' Good

I have incorporated more Minnesota-based products in my morning routine. Here are others I love and respect.

AVEDA
Headquarters in Blaine with stores inside Mall of America, Southdale, and the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport
I have seen a difference using Aveda's Invati line of products, which help reduce hair loss. I recently ran out of their scalp revitalizer, and after a couple weeks, noticed that my hair was falling out faster. The higher price point —$19 to $65 a bottle—is worth it.
www.aveda.com

BEESPA
I use BeeSpa's Hand and Foot Cream on my cuticles every morning. Their products are made with beeswax, shea butter and essential oils. The $30 jar will last many months.
www.beespa.com

BREVENA
My morning (and evening) routine includes BREVENA. The technology they use to create their moisturizers and creams are what doctors use to treat traumatized skin in burn centers. Their products have a higher price point, but a little goes a long way. One container typically lasts two to three months. If you're looking for a great gift, try their Essentials Starter Set, which is currently $59 on their website. It includes their Daily Hydration Moisturizer, the Restore & Hydrate Overnight Cream and their Foot & Heel Repair which will tackle dry, cracked feet.
www.brevena.com

CAMWELL
CamWell skin care products are natural and non-toxic. The specialize in products for those in radiation and chemotherapy treatments. They also have a line for newborns, which would be a perfect gift for a new mom you know.
www.ourcamwell.com

INTELLIGENT NUTRIENTS
Founded by Horst Rechelbacher, the man behind Aveda, Intelligent Nutrients makes hair and skin care products along with essential oils and even bug repellent. In 2008, they revealed the first USDA certified organic hair care line.
www.intelligentnutrients.com

WORKER B
In addition to candles, Worker B offers a skincare line of products, including lip balm, scented lotions and honey scrubs. Check out their new store inside Saint Paul's Keg and Case. You can miss them—just look for the hive of bees which live inside the building.
www.worker-b.com

For GLBT travel guides and more showcasing the best of Minnesota, check out Mike's website, www.givemethemike.com. You can also watch him deliver weekend event picks on KSTP's Twin Cities Live.

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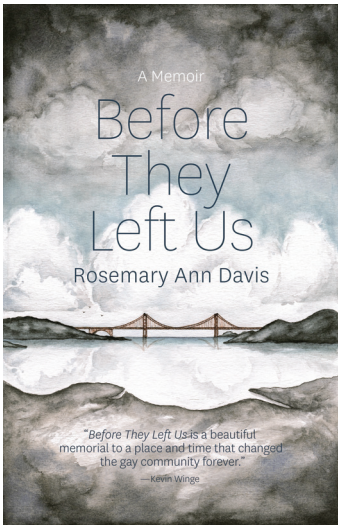

In Before They Left Us, Rosemary Davis explores the streets of 1970s San Francisco to find her identity, both as a woman and as an artist. In her firsthand account, she presents the people, politics and history surrounding her. From the news of the International Hotel's demolition, to the assassinations of her gay supervisor Harvey Milk and Democratic mayor George Moscone, to the onset of AIDS, Before They Left Us reveals one young woman's leap from a blue-collar Catholic neighborhood in Milwaukee to California's gay Main Street – the Castro.

The haunting stories in the memoir Before They Left Us capture the last crazy days of disco and move us into the onset of AIDS. Rosemary Davis illustrates the life stories of one a generation soon to be lost and describes her journey into a community that helped her blossom as a friend, sister, artist, activist and witness.

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Holiday Gift Guide

By E.B. Boatner

Books

1. CIRCULATING QUEERNESS: BEFORE THE GAY AND LESBIAN NOVEL
Natasha Hurley
University of Minnesota Press
$27
While "GLBT," or "Gay Studies" areas now exist in local booksellers, Natasha Hurley examines the emergence of gay and lesbian novels in a time that literature not only reflected the homosexual and lesbian experience, but helped create those lives. Citing "rogue circulation", Hurley concludes that early queer texts breached their boundaries, penetrating the consciousness of others in unpredictable ways.

2. SOUTHERN DECADENCE IN NEW ORLEANS
Howard Phillips Smith & Frank Perez
Louisiana State University Press
$36
Celebrating Southern Decadence's spirit of camaraderie, Smith and Perez present a history of what is now the "second-most profitable festival in New Orleans." Founded in 1972, modest Decadence burgeoned, now drawing thousands worldwide to cavort over Labor Day weekend. Histories and photographs will delight those attending March's Mardi Gras, and give tips to prepare celebrants for a NOLA return next September.

3. COZZI COVE: HAPPY ENDINGS
Joe Cosentino
Joe Cosentino
$4.99 Kindle, $10.99 paperback
Beach reading isn't only for the summer months, you know, and the fifth of Cosentino's Cozzi Cove series is as replete with massive pecs, bulging thighs and... well, everything a real beach can offer. Will Cal and Michael sell Cozzi Cove? Are there werewolves a-prowl? Will a matchmaker rejoin father and son? Well, this is Cozzi Cove; dive in.

4. THE RIGHT TO BE OUT: SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY IN AMRICA'S PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Stuart Biegel
University of Minnesota Press
$22.95
In this timely, updated second edition (originally published in 2010), Biegel continues to explore changes in legal issues involving GLBT rights for students and educators. What, in particular, is involved in an individual's right to be out? Biegel examines the social and political factors as well the rights implicit in the First and Fourteenth Amendments, offering information and strategies.

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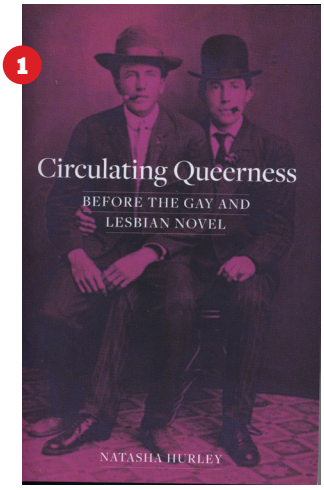

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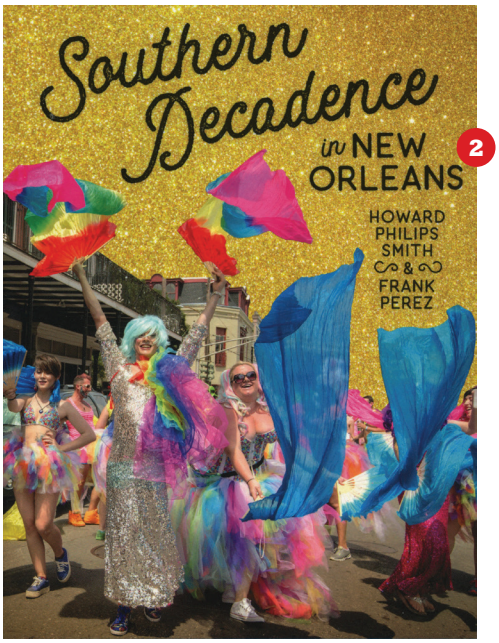

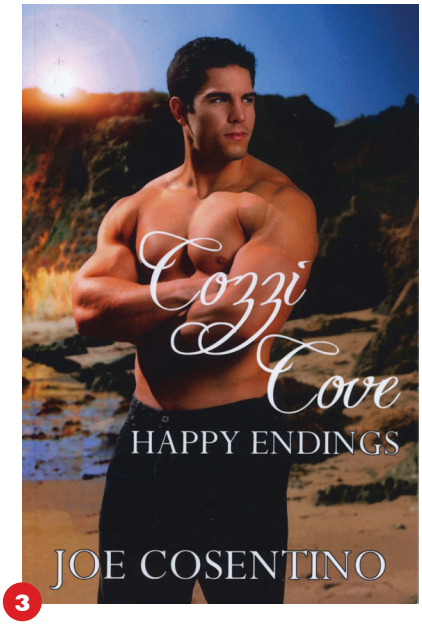

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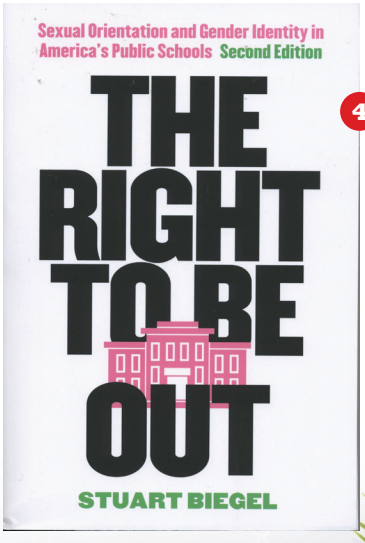

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Holiday Gift Guide

By E.B. Boatner

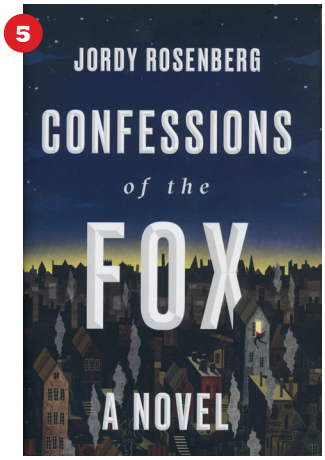
Books

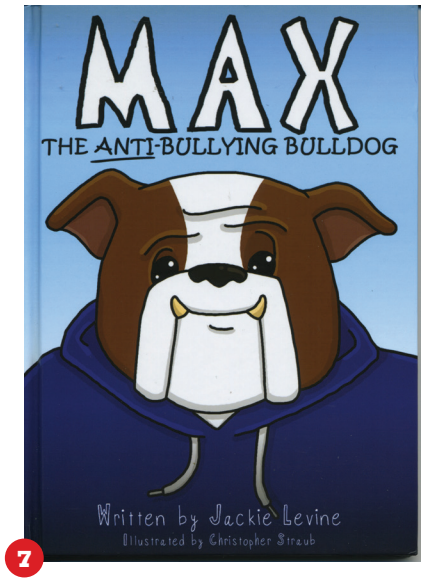
5. CONFESSIONS OF THE FOX
Jody Rosenstein
One World
$27
Rosenstein's debut novel is an unsettling fabric woven from Jack Shepard's purported hidden memoir (See Threepenny Opera), recently found and stolen by purported professor, Dr. R. Noth, currently pursued by his college overlords as he footnotes his own tale. Here, Jack is a trans man, fugitive with his lover, Bess. And that's it: the tale just gets darker and creepier.

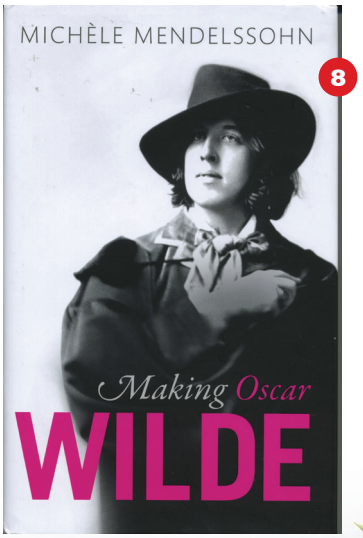
6. CALYPSO
David Sedaris
Little, Brown
$28
Set against Sedaris' purchase of Sea Section, a beach house, for his remaining family's pleasure, these stories are, as always, hilarious, but are haunted by the failings of one's aging self and the shades of those gone forever from the Sedaris orbit, especially the youngest sibling, Tiffany, dead of suicide in 2013. Dark, funny, longer lasting than your Christmas fruitcake.

7. MAX: THE ANTI-BULLYING BULLDOG
Jackie Levine; Ill. Christopher Straub
Jackie Levine
$18
Illustrated by local artist Christopher Straub, Levine's tale follows Max, who only wanted to be accepted. But large and gruff, he was snubbed by other denizens of the dog park, and himself turned into an angry bully. How Max turned himself—and the others—around offers a clear, visual lesson on how we can change ourselves for better and happier.

8. MAKING OSCAR WILDE
Michèle Mendelssohn
Oxford University Press
$24.95
A vital element of Mendelssohn's new Wilde biography was sparked by a Currier and Ives poster of Wilde as an Afro'd black man and two black women. Touring America in 1882, Wilde was discovering that the Irish (of which he was one) and the blacks occupied the same low—lowest—social rung. There's much more to this book, but this theme is unique and relevant.







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Holiday Gift Guide

By Kassidy Tarala

Pets

From significant others to parents to children to coworkers, holiday shopping can be exhausting—both for you and the wallet. But when it comes to our most beloved, there isn't a gift we wouldn't give or a cent we wouldn't spend to see the light in their eyes, the drool on their chins, and the wag in their tails. That's right, it's time to shop for our pets!

1. PAW WAX
From Pet Wants Minneapolis Southern Metro, Pet Wants Paw Wax is great for healing cracked, burnt, or injured paw pads. This wax is homemade with therapeutic oils and other natural ingredients. Not only is this product great—and safe—for your furry friends, but it also works great on your own cuticles.
$8
Pet Wants Minneapolis
petwantsmspsouthernmetro.com

2. DOG BEHAVIORAL CONSULTATIONS
From Lofty Dogs, these behavioral consultations are perfect for addressing any training, behavioral, or relationship concerns you might have with your dog. Lofty Dogs believes that all dogs are capable of good behavior, they just need to be properly taught how.
$120 for two-hour session
Lofty Dogs
loftydogs.com

3. PET WANTS DRY DOG AND CAT FOOD
From Pet Wants Minneapolis Southern Metro, these dry dog and cat foods are fresh and formulated with special ingredients to nourish your dog during all stages of life. Slow cooked in small batches to maintain nutrition, these dog and cat foods are always fresh, only up to a couple of weeks old as opposed to the standard month-old food seen in warehouses and retail stores.
$2.50 to $3.50 per pound
Pet Wants Minneapolis
petwantsmspsouthernmetro.com

4. DOG WALKING SERVICES
From Come, Sit, Stay, these dog walking services are perfect for any pup. Whether you're at work late, stuck in traffic, or just unable to get home in time, Come, Sit, Stay is happy to help. They offer walks for 15, 30, 45, or 60 minutes.
Starting at $15 per visit
Come, Sit, Stay
comesitstaytc.com

5. PETCHATZ DIGITAL DAYCARE
From PetChatz, this digital daycare allows for all-day interaction with your pets, no matter where you are. With two-way video chats, treat dispensing, calming aromatherapy, brain games, pet-to-parent messaging, and entertainment with DOGTV, PetChatz is perfect for any pet (or owner…) that struggles with separation anxiety.
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petchatz.com

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This activity is made possible by the voters of Minnesota through a Minnesota State Arts Board Operating Support grant, thanks to a legislative appropriation from the arts and cultural heritage fund.

Holiday Gift Guide

By Chris Tarbox

Sports

Every family or group of friends is guaranteed to have at least one major sports fan, so you'll have a good excuse to get one of these awesome sporty and athletic gifts for your special someone to wear out on the town or in the stands at the game.

1. WOOF HOODIE
Winter months in Minnesota are typically brutal, so we always need our trusty sweatshirts and hoodies to keep us all warm 'n toasty. This also applies to those who exercise and work out in the colder weather, so local athletic wear company Prideletics has you covered! This comfy cotton/polyester blend hoodie will keep you warm while getting fit.
$35
Prideletics
www.prideletics.com

2. MN UNITED FC MITCHELL & NESS EQUALIZER TEE
Want to bring out your inner soccer star? The Minnesota United FC's got you! This slick athletic t-shirt is made with a polyester mesh jersey material, perfect for staying cool in the warm summer months while kickin' it on the field with your friends.
$89.99
Minnesota United FC
www.mnufc.com/shop

3. SIGNATURE SPORTS TEE
Prideletics has built a pretty righteous theme around its wares: showing off your Pride. This ring-spin cotton/polyester t-shirt is perfect for GLBT athletes and allies hoping to get in a workout while showing off your rainbow colors!
$25
Prideletics
www.prideletics.com

4. MINNESOTA TWINS RAINBOW BALLCAP
Ready to root for the Twins and show off your Pride? Toss on this gorgeous New Era adjustable cap with a brilliant rainbow brim and a multicolor rendition of the Twins logo.
$30
Minnesota Twins
www.mlb.com/twins/ballpark/majestic-clubhouse-store

5. COLUMBIA HARBORSIDE PULLOVER SWEATER
Get ready for true comfort with Columbia's handsome midweight fleece pullover sweater, featuring a snap enclosure and mock neck. This is a perfect way to show off your support for Minnesota United while staying warm in the winter.
$89.99
Minnesota United FC
www.mnufc.com/shop

6. MINNESOTA TWINS PRIDE TEE
The Minnesota Twins are proud supporters of the GLBT community, and this fabulous t-shirt is perfect for any ballgame excursion… or any time, for that matter! This 47Brand navy cotton tee boasts a terrific rainbow version of the Twins logo that'll guarantee a great addition to your wardrobe.
$30
Minnesota Twins
www.mlb.com/twins/ballpark/majestic-clubhouse-store

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Holiday Gift Guide

By Kassidy Tarala

Fashion

During the holiday season, my outfit of choice is almost constantly cozy flannel pajamas. Okay, so maybe that's my outfit of choice year-round, but either way, the holiday season is all about surrounding yourself with the ones you love, things that make you happy, and clothes that make you feel comfortable. So why not give the great gift of comfort and style to the ones closest to you?
Pick from this list of clothes and accessories to show the one you love that they deserve to be stylish, but more importantly, they deserve to be comfortable.

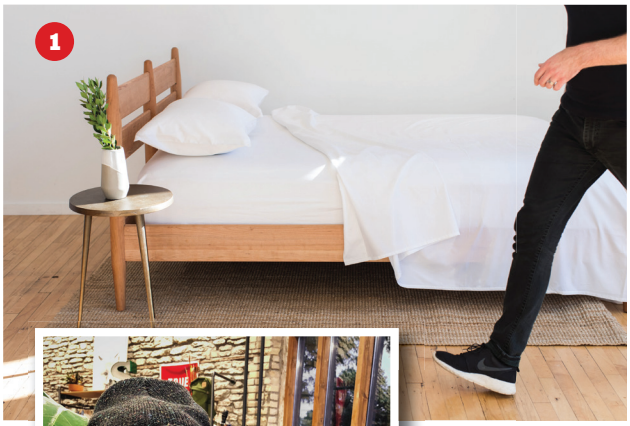
1. SATEEN SHEET SET
From Bokser Home, this sateen sheet set is the ultimate luxury bedding. They're made from 100 percent long staple cotton, certified chemical free, and silky soft to the touch. Wrap your loved one in comfort with this sateen sheet set.
$89 to $109
bokserhome.com

2. SCOUT JUMPING FOX TEE
From Scout, this American Apparel tri-blend oatmeal tee is perfect for the playful kid-at-heart in your life. Designed by local illustrator Tou Yia Xiong, this tee doesn't just support local artists, but it is also perfect for anyone with a unique fashion sense.
$32
scoutstyleshop.com

3. KATIN BLACK MARBLE BEANIE
From Scout, this acrylic knit black marble beanie will keep your special someone's head warm during these chilly, snowy holidays. The unique galactic design will surely earn the wearer plenty of compliments—and the gift-giver plenty of "thank you's"!
$20
scoutstyleshop.com

4. CREATURE LADY'S WALLET
From Christopher Straub, this lady's wallet will add some color to your special someone's purse for sure. With its vibrant pop of purple, this wallet has plenty of pockets and compartments for cash, change, and maybe even a snack or two (we can only hope.)
$10 (discounted from $85)
christopherstraub.com

5. PRIDESICLE TEE
From Christopher Straub, this PRIDEsicle tee is the perfect gift for anyone in your life who has pride for themselves, pride for who they love, and—as any true Minnesotan does—pride for their state. With unisex sizing, these shirts are available for men, women, children, and anyone in between.
$13
christopherstraub.com



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QUORUM SECTION

Holiday Gift Guide

By Chris Tarbox

Seniors

With the holiday season upon us, it's time to look for the best gifts that fit our loved ones of all ages. Here's a collection of gifts that would be perfect to gift the older adults in your life.

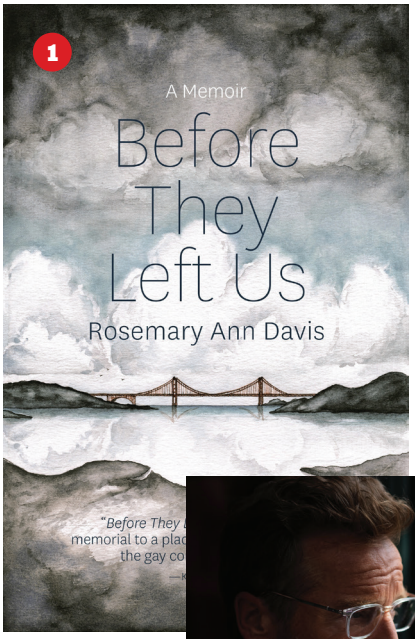
1. BEFORE THEY LEFT US
Written by author Rosemary Ann Davis, this memoir takes us back to 1970s San Francisco, chronicling the people and politics surrounding the narrator, a Midwest transplant living in the Castro neighborhood. This story recounts the assassination of Harvey Milk and the onset of the AIDS epidemic.
$7.99 (E-Book), $14.99 (paperback), $24.99 (hardcover)
Old Road Publishing
www.rosemaryanndavis.com

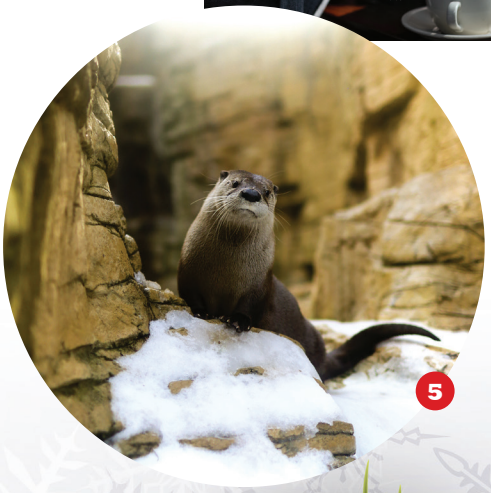
2. BEEPS & BOOPS RETRO OTTOMAN
Designed by Love and Upholstery, this delightful custom-made ottoman is the perfect way to kick up your feet after a long day. Made with vintage print fabric, as well as wool and leather accents, this colorful footrest will make for a great addition to your living room.
$185
MidModMen+friends
midmodmen.com

3. ROBERT MARC 896 IN COLOR QUARTZ
Looking to add some classy retro flair to your eyewear? Then check out these spectacles from Robert Marc NYC, stylistically influenced by New York and French savoir-faire. These glasses are offered in a variety of unique colors and premium materials to give you a chic look for the new year.
$425
InVision Distinctive Eyewear
invision-optical.com

4. CUSTOM-MADE PICTURE FRAMES
Future Framing, owned by local framer and art installer Miles Taylor, offers up affordable picture frames created with local wood and acid-free materials to ensure the protection of your art and photos. These are perfect to preserve your cherished memories and artistic treasures.
Starting at $50
Future Framing
futureframing.net

5. MINNESOTA ZOO MEMBERSHIP
You don't need to be a kid to enjoy all that Mother Nature has to offer at Apple Valley's famed Minnesota Zoo! You and/or a loved one can meet a fabulous coterie of animals and learn about the value of natural conservation by getting a one-year Zoo membership (single, dual, household, or grandparents).
$59-159
Minnesota Zoo
mnzoo.org





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By Randy Stern

Our Rides

This year's gift guide will focus on a vehicle our community loves very much: the motorcycle. They are always up front of every Pride parade and they are our symbol of absolute freedom.
Get your motor running for these wonderful holiday gifts for you and your motorcycle.

HELMET: In Minnesota, Wisconsin, North Dakota, and South Dakota, the law is that you have to wear a helmet if you are 17 years of age and older. Iowa does not require a helmet to ride. No matter the law, it is always good to have head protection when you ride. Helmets can range from a basic open-faced helmet that can cost as low as $159, to a highly advanced one with a rearview camera and face view display for upwards of $1,700. In-between is a helmet that will protect you from an injury, if your motorcycle in involved in an accident. Ride safe, always!
www.bellhelmets.com/powersports/helmets
www.skullytechnologies.com/shop/skully-fenix-ar

RIDING GEAR: The key is to be protected when riding, rather than looking cool. A lot of riders do not wear jackets or riding pants/chaps, but that does not mean that you cannot be cool or warm and be protected when you ride. Jackets can start around $100 and can go upwards to $1,800, depending on style and material. Riding pants or chaps can also start at around $100 and go upwards. You can also get riding jeans, too. They also have protective material woven into them. It is also suggested for serious riders to consider base layers for fall riding and other protective gear underneath your jackets.
www.alpinestars.com/products/road/oscar-collection
www.ssgear.com/category/13/womens-motorcycle-jackets

RIDING GLOVES: To continue the protection theme here, it is always good to have a great set of riding gloves and some boots to finish your riding wardrobe. Gloves range from the type of use to protect against wind and weather. Gloves can cost from $40 up to $400.
www.alpinestars.com/products/road/gloves

RIDING SHOES AND BOOTS: Riding shoes and boots also range in terms of weather protection and use. All of these footwear options are designed to handle the heat and protection from the engine and exhaust. We found footwear to range from $100 upwards towards $500.
www.revzilla.com/motorcycle-boots

LED LIGHTS: Most motorcycles on the road are running on standard or halogen lighting. It is proven that LED lighting emits a longer beam and a brighter light overall. You can also add side LED lights to the end of your handlebar grips, replace the rear brake light and turn signals front and back. Better vision means improved safety. revivalcycles.com/products
www.revzilla.com/motorcycle-lighting

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By Randy Stern

Our Rides

BACKPACKS: Don't just get anything to carry your work gear—or to bring your stuff with you on a weekend ride. Lately, backpacks have been the preferred way to bring your stuff while commuting by motorcycle. They now have bags that include pockets for your laptop, tablet, and other electronics—all with extra protection for riding. Backpacks run from $18 to $899, with varying degrees of protection, comfort, and capacity.
www.revzilla.com/motorcycle-backpacks

SADDLEBAGS: Saddlebags also run the variety from soft-sided cases to color-matched hard cases with enough capacity for a weekend's full of clothes and toiletries. You could get that detaches from the bike and can roll right into your hotel. Pricing range from $16 to $1,350, depending on the material, mounting, and make/model of your motorcycle. Make sure you have the hardware installed before putting on those bags.
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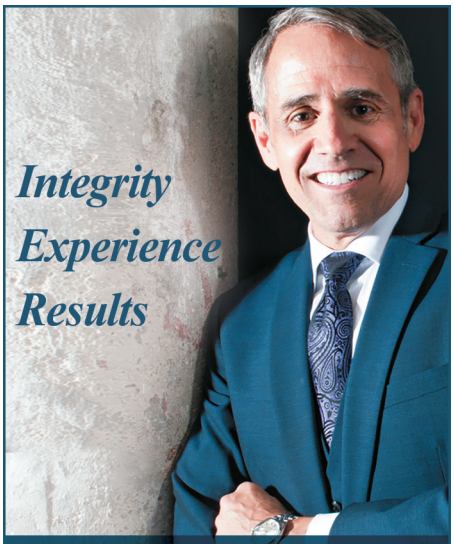

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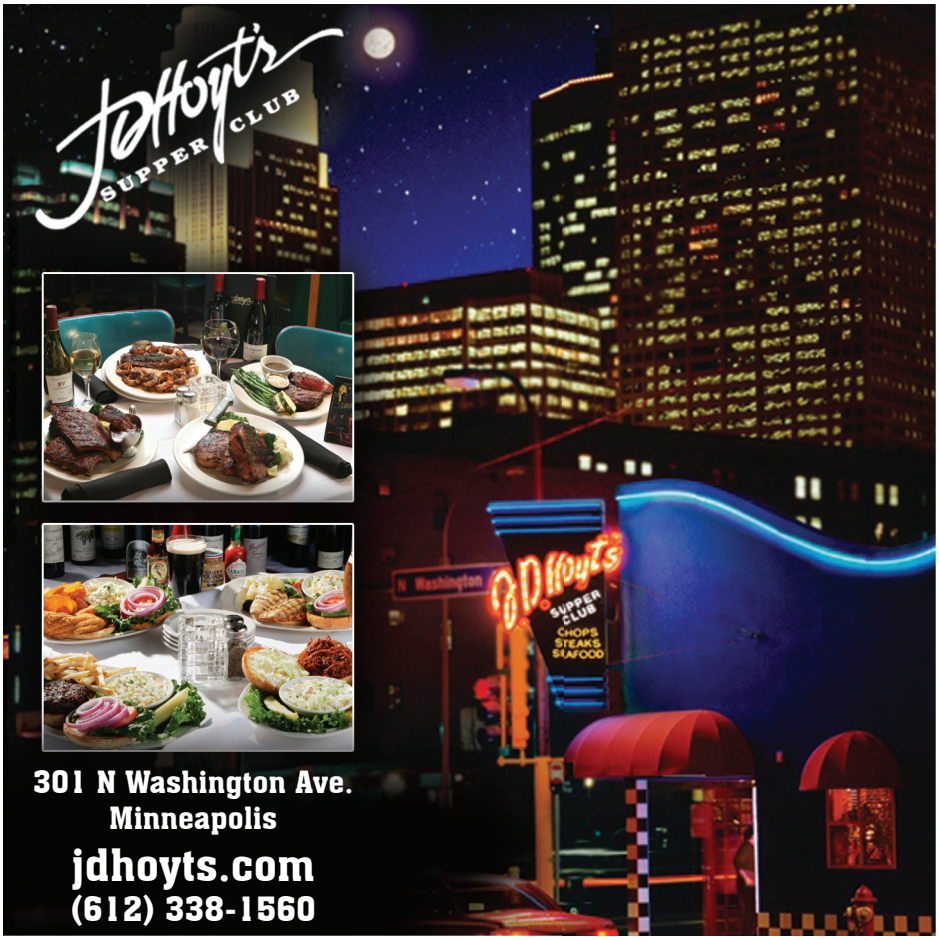

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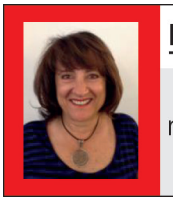

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SKIRTING THE ISSUES | BY ELLEN KRUG

Loss

A couple months ago, I was contacted by a researcher who asked whether the ways I celebrate Thanksgiving and Christmas have changed since I came out as transgender. My reply was yes, there's been a big change: all holidays—especially Christmas—have lost their luster because of how they've become reminders of what I've lost.

Now the holidays are something for me to dread.

As many know, I came to this party awfully late. I didn't begin to deal with my sexual and gender identity issues until I was in my late forties; I was 52 when I formally transitioned genders and introduced "Ellie" to the world. Before then, I had lived an incredibly charmed life while presenting as an ostensibly straight man.

My wife Lydia and I, high school sweethearts, grew up in Cedar Rapids dreaming of a life together. Even as teens, we had a "Grand Plan", where I would become a trial lawyer, she a retail clothes buyer, and together we'd live in a big house raising our kids, along with a big dog. Incredibly, all of what we dreamt came to fruition in a magnificent way.

Our 70-year-old house on Knollwood Drive was in a neighborhood of quiet streets, expansive lawns, and towering oaks. We bought the ugly duckling of the neighborhood—it was such an eyesore with overgrown evergreens and a dilapidated front porch—and with much elbow grease and money, transformed it into a beautiful bird. Before everything in our marriage fell apart, the house had undergone three major remodels, including a 1,200 square-foot two story addition.

Hanging in the dining room of the Knollwood house was a wonderful chandelier of gold and lights. A part of the room was framed by oak wainscoting; rumor had it that Cedar Rapids native son Grant Wood was the carpenter who installed the paneling. A bank of windows faced a quarter-acre lawn with old growth trees and a patch of wild flowers.

When I think of the Knollwood house and my old life, I remember the holiday meals that unfolded in that dining room. Ours was the holiday destination for many and it was common to have fifteen or more people around the table laughing, talking, being. The room would be filled with the sights and smells of turkey or ham, twice baked potatoes, green bean casserole, and fresh baked Texas rolls. Afterward, there would be desert coupled with Chardonnay and the comfort of being with my tribe—those who loved me unconditionally.

For the near two decades that I lived in the Knollwood house, I fought with myself daily over my same-sex attractions and the "silly" idea that I was female. It was a secret battle between heart and soul, between love for others and love of my authentic self. I engaged in that battle because I knew that if my secret pulls and tugs ever surfaced, I would lose all that I cherished, all that Lydia and I had built together.

When we had holiday dinners in the Knollwood house dining room, the war within me always found itself at a truce.

Seated at the dining room table, looking at my soul mate, Lydia, and our two young daughters, along with relatives and friends, I would remind myself it was for moments like that why I stayed true, why I self-sacrificed and why I could never, ever become the real me.

Look around you at this very moment. This is the reason we're hanging on, Krug. How in the world could you ever leave all of this? Because of a stupid idea about being female and liking men? Never.

However, because authenticity will continue to shout at you until you listen, and because I eventually came to understand that I'd someday lay on my deathbed and regret not being me, I eventually found the courage to leave.

Christmas 2005 was the last time I ever had a holiday meal at the Knollwood house. By then, I had already moved out to begin my "gender journey." Lydia and I were in a stalemate, trying desperately to find a way to salvage our love and nuclear family. I had stayed over on Christmas Eve (the last time I ever slept in that house) and the ensuing holiday meal in the dining room was bittersweet.

Since then, Christmas has become a time of loneliness and occasional despair. I turn down most invitations to relative or friends' holiday dinners because I don't want sit with others who have what I lost. I don't need the reminder of what had once been.

I know that come every January, things will change for the better with the annual renewal of hope. Perhaps someday I will again find what I lost.

But perhaps not. ∎

Ellen (Ellie) Krug is the author of Getting to Ellen: A Memoir about Love, Honesty and Gender Change *(2013). She speaks and trains on diversity and inclusion topics; visit www.elliekrug.com where you can also sign up for her newsletter, The Ripple. She welcomes your comments at ellenkrugwriter@gmail.com.*

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